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SIPDIS

WHA/CCA FOR J.HILLSMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/19/2019

TAGS: ETRD ETTC PREL CU SZ

SUBJECT: SWITZERLAND: RESPONSE TO REVIEW FOR SUSPENSION OF
TITLE III OF THE LIBERTAD ACT

REF: STATE 115416

Classified By: Economic Officer Leslie Freriksen for reasons 1.4(b) and
(d).

¶11. (C) Summary and Comment: Post assesses that the Swiss government has worked to promote the advancement of democracy and human rights in Cuba, having made those key features of a bilateral dialogue with the Cuban government that began in January 2006. A decision not to renew Title III suspension for Switzerland would cause a Swiss public backlash and undermine Bern's role as Protecting Power for the United States. Post believes that renewing Title III suspension for Switzerland is in the interest of the United States. End Summary and Comment.

Promotion of Democracy and Human Rights in Cuba

¶12. (C) As part of a bilateral Swiss-Cuban political dialogue that began in January 2006, the Swiss regularly raise democracy and human rights issues in Cuba with Cuban authorities. The Swiss Federal Department for Foreign Affairs (FDFA) informed post that the last such Swiss-Cuban discussions were held the first week of November, 2009 in Cuba. According to FDFA, the Swiss again used this opportunity to emphasize democracy and human rights in Cuba.

Promotion of Civil Society

¶13. (SBU) Swiss development and humanitarian aid programming includes delivery and sustainability elements that promote the development of civil society.

High-Level Diplomatic Visits

¶14. (SBU) Per paragraph 2, a Cuban delegation led at the Assistant Secretary level visited Cuba this month for bilateral political discussions.

Nature of Investment in Cuba

¶15. (U) Switzerland imported approximately \$23.4 million in goods from Cuba in 2008. The majority of these imports were agriculture products, including tobacco (81%), beverages (9%), and preserved foods (4%). The Swiss exported approximately \$18.1 million in goods to Cuba, including pharmaceuticals (33%) and machinery (27%). Swiss direct investment in Cuba is described by Swiss officials as minimal (there are no public statistics). Total Swiss government development and humanitarian assistance to Cuba was budgeted

at approximately \$3 million for 2009. Actual Swiss assistance provided to Cuba in 2008 was \$3.9 million. Nearly all of this aid is for medical care, food security, and humanitarian relief.

Bilateral Trade Agreements

¶6. (U) Switzerland and Cuba signed a bilateral trade agreement in 1952. The two countries signed a bilateral investment treat in 1996.

Exchange Program

¶7. (U) Post knows of no government-sponsored exchange programs with Cuba.

Comment

¶8. (C) Post assesses that the Swiss government has worked to promote the advancement of democracy and human rights in Cuba, having made those issues key features of its bilateral dialogue with the Cuban government. Moreover, the Swiss Embassy in Havana acts as Protecting Power for the U.S. Interests Section there. Senior Swiss officials continue to emphasize to Post Switzerland's commitment to fulfilling this role, notwithstanding the recalcitrance of the Cuban government. A decision not to renew Title III suspension for

Switzerland would cause a Swiss public backlash and undermine Bern's role as Protecting Power for the U.S. Post believes that renewing Title III suspension for Switzerland is in the interest of the United States.

¶5.
BEYER